



Real Possibilities

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In support of Governor's H.B. # 5054: *AN ACT CONCERNING UNEMPLOYED JOB SEEKERS*

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Public & Public Employees Committee

Good Afternoon, my name is Nora Duncan and I am the State Director of AARP. I want to thank Governor Malloy, Legislative Leaders and the Committee for tackling the disturbing practice of employers excluding the currently unemployed from the pool of qualified candidates simply because of their unemployed status. A prohibition against this practice is a good step toward reducing the barriers faced by job seekers in a difficult economy and highly competitive job market.

To clear up any misconceptions about AARP, we are a nonpartisan social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 37 million nationwide, and over 603,000 here in Connecticut. One third of our members are still working. AARP believes that one's possibilities should never be limited by their age and that, in fact, age and experience can expand your possibilities, whether they be personal or professional. AARP is a network of people, tools and information and an ally on issues that affect the lives of our members and the age 50+ population in general.

I am here today because whether it is about staying in the workforce or finding work when faced suddenly with unemployment, the issues of employment and financial security are front and center for AARP members and their families in Connecticut. Our members tell us how important financial security is to them, so AARP is dedicated to supporting the efforts of older jobseekers through both public policy changes and through free resources to help individuals navigate career changes, regardless of their circumstances. (see end of page 2)

Finding a new job can be difficult for anyone, but older workers face unique challenges which can contribute to longer periods of unemployment than their younger counterparts. In December, 46 percent of older jobseekers were classified as "long-term unemployed". This means that these older job seekers had been out of work and looking for a job for 27 weeks or more. That's only a small part of the story. Nationally, jobseekers age 55 and up spend an average of 46 weeks looking for work, as compared to 34 weeks for younger jobseekers. That is nearly a year, on average, of unemployment. These numbers reflect what we see here in Connecticut, the 7th "oldest" state in the nation.

The bottom line is that qualified and experienced workers should never be disqualified from employment simply because they are not currently working.

Just how prevalent is this practice? Here's an example:

In 2011, the National Employment Law Project (NELP) conducted a 4-week review of job postings that appeared on four of the nation's most prominent online job sites. (March to April on CareerBuilder.com, Indeed.com, Monster.com, and Craigslist.com)

Just this brief snapshot of jobs postings identified more than 150 ads that included exclusions based on current employment status. The vast majority of these ads required that applicants "must be currently employed." A quick and nonscientific search of sites by AARP CT staff last month found several current examples, including some here in Connecticut.

Excluding jobseekers based on their current unemployment status is not only unjust and unfair, it is shortsighted. Businesses are very likely missing out on hiring highly experienced workers that can add value to their bottom line. Employees aged 50-plus are experienced, motivated and highly engaged, all qualities that studies link to a company's favorable performance.

Connecticut needs to give the long-term unemployed every opportunity to find gainful employment. New Jersey, Oregon and the District of Columbia have all passed similar legislation to that before you today and other states, such as Massachusetts, are considering it now. I look forward to working with you to enact House Bill #5054 and other pieces of legislation this session that will help bulldoze barriers to reemployment faced by older jobseekers.

Thank you.

FREE ON LINE RESOURCES FOR JOB SEEKERS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND MORE:

<http://lifereimagined.aarp.org>

<http://www.aarp.org/work/>

<http://www.aarp.org/work/self-employment/>

<http://www.linkedin.com/> Group with professional content, job postings and more: [Life Reimagined for Work](#)